

Woodrow Wilson

on Lincoln's Birthday

THE BEREAL QUARTERLY

FOR THE SOUTHERN MOUNTAINS

Vol. XV.

APRIL, 1911

No. 1.

CONTENTS

A Mountain Cabin— <i>Frontispiece</i>	- - -	2
Incidents	- - - - -	3

Lincoln's Birthday—Meeting At Carnegie Hall

Addresses:

The Berea Association, Dr. Cady	- - -	5
Chairman's Address, - Seth Low	- - -	7
Letters for the Cause, - President Taft	- - -	10
	Justice Harlan	- 11
	Gov. Willson of Ky.	11
	Census Dir. Durand	12
Lincoln's Boyhood, President Frost	- - -	13
Mountain Preacher's		
Conversion, - - Prof. Penniman	- - -	21
Berea's Cause National, Woodrow Wilson		23
Information	- - - - -	29

\$1.00 PER YEAR

30c. A SINGLE COPY

BEREA, KENTUCKY

Entered at the Berea, Ky., post office as second class mail matter.

BEREA COLLEGE PRINTING DEPARTMENT



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2016

Address of President Frost

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

We are met to celebrate the birthday of Abraham Lincoln. Lowell has called him the first typical American. And he is more than an American. Lincoln's character—emblazoned by his public acts, and sealed by his death—has made him the ideal hero of democracy for the world.

Lincoln lived almost in our own time. I well remember the day on which he was elected, and the day on which he was shot. It would be interesting to know how many persons in this assembly remember seeing or hearing Abraham Lincoln. Will such persons please stand for a moment? (About twenty persons stood.) We congratulate you, friends, on your precious recollections.

Now the circumstances of Lincoln's childhood have seldom been understood. He was born into a state of society not unlike that of England in the time of Alfred the Great. The community to which his parents belonged was unschooled and unadorned. His father was a less cultivated man than his grandfather. In that region, as in Alfred's England, the traditions of civilization were wavering, and the great energies of life were absorbed in a bitter struggle with nature and with the barbarians. How could there have been such communities in America in the nineteenth century?

It was a matter of environment. No human being, and no small community, can carry on progress and civilization alone. Civilization might be defined as a state of society in which all valuable ideas are quickly and easily shared by many. Now in pioneer life, which has been so great a feature in all American development, the northern pioneer was always in close touch with the older parts of

the country, while the southern pioneer was isolated by the vast mountain region which forbade canals and other effective highways.

Call up the map of the South and you shall see grouped around east Tennessee the mountain ends of seven other states. This is one of God's grand divisions, the mountain region of the South, Appalachian America. It was this vast region, lying between the older settlements and the Kentucky frontier, which made the Kentucky frontiersman less able to keep up with civilization than the frontiersman of western New York or Ohio.

Abraham Lincoln did not spring from the so-called "poor whites" of the South. The old South had its small class of aristocratic slave-holders, and it had its "poor whites," people who lived in the midst of slavery, and were degraded by competition with slave labor. But there was another class of people, in Lincoln's childhood widespread, but later confined to the mountains, a true yeomen class, who owned land but did not own slaves, and it was among these that our great president had his parentage.

But this is a class of people quite forgotten and unreckoned with. At the outbreak of the civil war, Lincoln alone of the statesmen of North or South knew that they were there, and he counted upon them to stand for the Union. They were largely descended from revolutionary soldiers. Their traditions were of Washington and Andrew Jackson, and the later subtleties of slavery and state rights they knew nothing about. They did respond to Lincoln's call. They held Kentucky in the Union, they made West Virginia secede from secession, they put 180,000 fighting men into the ranks that followed the old flag.

For these people Lincoln had a profound affection. He believed in their capacity, their goodness of heart, and their readiness to respond to opportunity. More than

once he expressed to General Howard and others his anxiety that these mountain people, whom he called his people, should have educational guidance and help. And it is to this cause that Berea College is devoted.

Now the mountain man needs a friendly interpreter. The newspapers have done him scant justice, and when you see his lank form and ill-fitting homespun as he lounges at a railroad station, he is not at first sight prepossessing. If you could have seen Lincoln himself in his rail-splitting days you might not altogether have admired him!

To appreciate the mountaineer you must first of all consider his isolation. You will never know what that word means till you have ridden with me a hundred miles up and down the beds of mountain streams. Remember that this region has no arms of the sea like Scotland, no inland lakes or Roman roads like Switzerland, and that it is two hundred miles wide and six hundred miles long. When you have gone twenty miles from the railroad you are in the seventeenth century!

The country is laid out by nature in valleys, each with its own stream, and each being a little nation by itself, isolated from the great world and from all other mountain valleys. Strung along the stream are the log-cabins—first type of American architecture, with their horizontal pillars! Back of the cabin rises the cornfield, so precipitous that you readily believe the man who tells you that he has been “a leetle lame” ever since he fell out of his cornfield!

The next step toward understanding the mountaineer is to note that his chief peculiarities are not degradations but honest survivals from the times of our ancestors. His speech is archaic. The past tense of “drag” in the mountains is “drug.” And he keeps the strong syllabic plurals. As we ride up to a mountain cabin the owner comes to

the door and says, "Howdy, strangers, light and hitch your beastes." That is good Anglo-Saxon!

In one word, these people are our contemporary ancestors!

Now in discovering this region and the peculiarities of its people Berea College has discovered a neglected national resource. More urgent than the conservation of forests is the conservation of men. More profitable than the development of mines and water power is the development of our home population.

The mountains were first settled only in the fertile valleys, but these big families have compelled the cultivation of land never meant for the plow. This fullness has come about in the last thirty years, in which the population has reached the boiling point—the people must improve their agriculture or emigrate. The new census will show county after county in which a third of the voting men are illiterate. It will show more than 3,000,000 people so shut off, so beleaguered by nature, so destitute of leadership, that they must have special educational help. There is thus presented an educational problem unlike any other in our land.

To this problem Berea College has given earnest attention. The situation called upon us to do some constructive and original work. The task we set ourselves is to help the mountain people in two or three decades to make the same steps of progress which the rest of the country has made in a hundred and fifty years.

First of all, to benefit the mountain region we do not train its young people to leave their homes and enter into the competitions of the city, but we train them to go back and improve mountain life. A mountain boy gave us the motto for this work when he said, "We want to make the mountains a better place to be born in."

But to do this we have to emphasize not our regular college course, but our industrial courses. And such courses for mountain conditions have never existed—they must be created. Agriculture at an angle of forty-five degrees and household management ten miles from a store are quite different from these arts as known in "York State."

In the second place, we aim to protect and cherish all that is best in the present traditions of the mountain people. We would not ruthlessly introduce every custom of the modern world. Many of their ways are really better for them than our ways would be. For example, we would keep alive their fireside industries. It is a means of grace for a mountain woman to have such an artistic work as counterpane weaving going forward in her home.

In the third place, we condescend to "peddle" education among those who cannot go to school. We send out traveling libraries. We keep tents, wagons and stereopticons moving through the remote counties in the summer months to scatter seed-thoughts of hygiene, farm management, and education. They often adjourn court in a mountain county to listen to such a lecture.

In the fourth place, we do all we can to co-operate with other schools, and particularly to make the public school system effective. The public schools are established by law, but they largely fail for lack of competent management. We strive to teach the duties of school trustees, and we have a normal department in which the majority of students are young men.

Berea is not as solitary in this work as it once was. While not adopting all our principles and methods the great religious bodies are at work in this field. The Congregationalists were the first, and closely followed by the Episcopalians in the Carolinas. The Presbyterians have perhaps the largest number of schools, and a notable trio

near Asheville. The Baptists are at Mossy Creek in Tennessee and elsewhere. We recently assisted the Reformed Church in establishing its first mountain school at McKee. The American Sunday School Union, of which the late Morris K. Jesup was president, has shed light in many remote valleys. And there are certain ladies who are giving to this work a rare devotion—Miss Goodrich in North Carolina, Miss Pettit in Kentucky, and Miss Berry near the mountains of Georgia. But it should be understood that all these agencies barely touch the problem. It would require a miracle to feed 3,000,000 people with these few loaves and small fishes.

We are not here to ask for money tonight, but Lincoln's birthday is a good occasion on which to consider in a broad way how much these three million people of his kin and kind, located where they are, may be worth to the South and the Nation.

The South has always lacked that so-called "middle class" of independent tillers of their own land which makes for stability and prosperity. In these mountaineers we find the source for this most desirable element.

But more—the problem of the South must seriously include the problem of the white South. We have done something, for negro education. But negro education itself can never succeed, and the South can never be what it ought to be, until more is done for white education. And of all the white men of the South the mountaineer is at once the most needy and the most hopeful.

And for the Nation—do we not sometimes tremble for the continuance of our American traditions? Commercially, do we not wish to increase the earning and the buying capacity of our home population? Politically and morally, are we not concerned for the increase of good citizenship? Here is the opportunity to give 3,000,000 native born

Americans of purest English descent—kinsmen of ours—a chance to count in the forces of national life.

Now for a task so great, so patriotic and so urgent the means thus far employed are inadequate and petty. All the schools which are attempting to contribute to this work are supported in a hand-to-mouth fashion. Berea College itself, which is the oldest and many times over the strongest in grasp and resource of all the mountain schools—Berea itself is working at a pitiful disadvantage for lack of means proportioned to the task. The truth is—and I ought to tell you the truth—there should be schools for these mountain people as amply equipped and as generously supported as are Hampton and Tuskegee for the colored people. I make this comparison with the utmost loyalty to these noble institutions. No money has ever been more wisely bestowed than the money that has been given to them. The negro was the man most disadvantaged, he responds to opportunity, and he ought to have all this help, and more.

But I refuse to believe that giving to one good cause need diminish the gifts to another. We have money enough for all, the money that will be gladly offered when the proper application is made.

Now my proposition is that it will be good patriotism, good statesmanship and good economy to give the mountaineers schools as well sustained as these noble institutions for the Freedman.

The work required can never be done without some such provision no matter how faithful smaller schools may be. Take the matter of hygiene. Several schools maintain trained nurses. But much more is needed than this. Berea has besides its nurses a physican of best preparation here and abroad, who has now examined thousands of mountain students, and is ready to do large things for the

health of this whole region. Friends gave some money and we borrowed more and built him a shelter for patients and a good operating room. But such work ought to have a well equipped hospital and be supported in some better way than by passing the hat.

So with our domestic science. We have the rural problem in its extreme form. We must create a domestic science adapted to homes on the headwaters of a thousand creeks and branches. To do this we must give this department an equipment and support commensurate with its great task. The same is true of mountain agriculture.

The whole case of the mountaineer is summed up in the case of Lincoln. His mother had six books, the Bible and Pilgrim's Progress for religion, a history of the United States and a Life of Washington for politics, and Æsop's Fables and Robinson Crusoe for literature. Shut up to this select library, Lincoln read these books many times. He "fletcherized" them. Years after he found his seventh book in a copy of the Indiana statutes, prefaced by the Declaration of Independence.

Now if it had not been for these six books Lincoln's great soul would have been strangled in its birth.

And has not Lincoln hallowed the log cabin? I can never pass one of those humble cabins in the mountains without thinking of the possible Lincoln that it holds, and renewing my resolution to do all that in me lies, and to persuade others, to shed the light of education into every mountain home.

As an appendix to this prosaic account of the mountain region I have asked Professor Penniman—who knows the mountains better than any other man—to give one anecdote.